

Post-Jobs, Apple to unleash new iPhone

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Apple's Senior Vice President of Worldwide product marketing Phil Schiller discusses the new iPhone 4s at the company's headquarters October 4. Customers in Sydney and Tokyo will get the latest iPhone Friday.

Apple fans in Australia on Friday became the first in the world to get their hands on the latest iPhone as the US technology giant unleashed its first device since the death of co-founder Steve Jobs.

In a party atmosphere, hundreds of people queued outside the technology giant's four-storey flagship Sydney store, filming the experience on their iPhones and iPads as staff inside clapped, cheered and chanted.

Sydneysider Tom Mosca, 15, was first through the door.

"It feels amazing, it is one of the greatest feelings in the world so far," he said after queuing for more than three days to snare an iPhone 4S.

"I did it for Steve Jobs as a tribute. I was very sad at his passing," he told AFP on the pavement outside, where flowers surrounded a picture of the Apple icon, who died last week from cancer aged 56.

Networks across Australia began taking orders for the iPhone 4S last weekend with top telecom companies reporting unprecedented pre-launch interest.

Telecom, Vodafone and Optus shops in central Sydney also had queues outside Friday, though far smaller than at the Apple shop.

The iPhone 4S is already a record-breaker for an Apple product, with more than one million sales in the first 24 hours of pre-orders around the world last week.

Bidding to build on the proven track record of the best-selling smartphone, Apple says the latest iteration boasts faster speeds, a voice-controlled assistant called Siri and an improved camera.

For some it looks too similar to its predecessor and they were underwhelmed when it was unveiled on October 4, when many people had expected an iPhone 5 to be revealed.

However, sales are expected to benefit from an outpouring of sympathy for Jobs.

Queues also built up outside Apple's store in Tokyo's upscale Ginza district.

Ryosuke Ishinabe, 24, was first in the queue after camping out since Tuesday morning.

"I have never queued up in my life to buy something. But I felt like

doing so this time because Steve Jobs passed away and this phone will be his posthumous work," he said.

The launch of the iPhone 4S comes at a testing time for smartphone rival Research in Motion, whose BlackBerry system has this week been impaired by glitches across the world, to the chagrin of its frustrated subscribers.

RIM has struggled this year with weaker sales of the BlackBerry against rivals such as the iPhone, various models from Taiwan's HTC, and other handsets running Google's Android software.

However, huge questions now hang over the future of Apple, with the spotlight on Tim Cook, who was made chief executive of the Cupertino, California-based company in August after Jobs's resignation.

The performance of the new iPhone will be seen as an early test for Apple's life after Jobs, the creative visionary whose death was mourned worldwide by government leaders, industry titans and ordinary fans alike.

On Friday the iPhone 4S launches in Australia, Japan, Germany, France, Britain, the United States and Canada, before rolling out in 22 more countries by the end of October.

In the United States the smartphone will sell for between \$199 and \$399, depending on memory capacity.

In Japan, carrier Smartphone will for the first time no longer be the exclusive iPhone carrier as rival KDDI joins the fray.

Both will hold early morning ceremonies marking the start of store sales.

With the launch of iPhone 4S also comes the launch of iOS, Apple's latest mobile operating system boasting 200 new features and iCloud, a service that automatically and wirelessly stores content and pushes it to Apple devices.

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